

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please amend the specification as follows:

On page 10, please replace the paragraph that starts on line 13 with the word “Alumina” and ends on line 23 with the abbreviation “MN” with the following amended paragraph:

Alumina fibers are described, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 4,954,462 (Wood et al.) and 5,185,299 ~~5,185,29~~ (Wood et al.). In some embodiments, the alumina fibers are polycrystalline alpha alumina fibers and comprise, on a theoretical oxide basis, greater than 99 percent by weight  $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$  and 0.2-0.5 percent by weight  $\text{SiO}_2$ , based on the total weight of the alumina fibers. In another aspect, some desirable polycrystalline, alpha alumina fibers comprise alpha alumina having an average grain size of less than 1 micrometer (or even, in some embodiments, less than 0.5 micrometer). In another aspect, in some embodiments, polycrystalline, alpha alumina fibers have an average tensile strength of at least 1.6 GPa (in some embodiments, at least 2.1 GPa, or even, at least 2.8 GPa). Exemplary alpha alumina fibers are marketed under the trade designation “NEXTEL 610” by 3M Company, St. Paul, MN.

On page 13, please replace the paragraph that starts on line 13 with the word “A” and ends on line 24 with the number “64” with the following amended paragraph:

A schematic of an exemplary apparatus for making continuous metal matrix wire 26 for use in MCCW 20 of the present invention is shown in FIG. 4. Tows of continuous ceramic and/or carbon fibers 44 are supplied from supply spools 46, and are collimated into a circular bundle and for ceramic fibers, heat-cleaned while passing through tube furnace 48. The fibers 44 are then evacuated in vacuum chamber 50 before entering crucible 52 containing the melt 54 of metallic matrix material (also referred to herein as “molten metal”). The fibers are pulled from supply spools 46 by caterpuller 56. Ultrasonic probe 58 is positioned in the melt 54 in the vicinity of the fiber to aid in infiltrating the melt 54 into tows 44. The molten metal of the wire 26 cools and solidifies after exiting crucible 52 through exit die 60, although some cooling may occur before the wire 26 fully exits crucible 52. Cooling of wire 26 is enhanced by streams of gas or liquid from device 62 that impinge on the wire 26. Wire 26 is collected onto spool 64.

On page 15, please replace the paragraph that starts on line 20 with the word “Typically” and ends on line 23 with the number “64” with the following amended paragraph:

Typically, the wire 26 is cooled after exiting the exit die 60 by contacting the wire 26 with a liquid (e.g., water) or gas (e.g., nitrogen, argon, or air) from device 62. Such cooling aids in providing the desirable roundness and uniformity characteristics, and freedom from voids. Wire 26 is collected on spool 64.